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Learning Activity #2: Modifier Menu

**Activity Description**

Students will write menu descriptions focusing on using strong adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. They will work in pairs to complete this assignment. This assignment will be used as a cumulative assessment over a few chapters in their grammar textbooks (verbs and modifiers). My students are pretty familiar with using Microsoft Office features: inserting text boxes, changing font features, and inserting clipart. Some of my students know how to pull images from the web, too. From past experiences, this time I would like to teach students how to use the Internet to find exact images to represent their writing (They enjoyed having this option in past writing assignments, so I would like to transfer the same excitement to this writing project). I would also like to show students a few resource links that explain some food preparation and cooking terms, so they will be able to have a variety of strong verbs to effectively use in their writing. I think a day’s discussion would be suitable for introducing the resource links and images to help students be prepared to use on their own. A brief conversation would take place about effective, appropriate searching on the Internet. In addition to using the Internet for resources, I will be requiring students to reference the websites they use in their final menu presentation. Students will be required to produce a paper/pen brainstorm of their menu (completed at their desks) before heading to the desktop computers in the same classroom.

**Learning Objectives**

My 6th grade English students will participate in this activity. They will practice and demonstrate the following skills and knowledge:

* Enhance their word choice through the use of strong modifiers and verbs.
* Use sensory details and imagery.
* Search and use the Internet in a mature, responsible manner.
* Insert images that relate to their written descriptions.
* Provide a list of resources used to complete the project.

**Technology Integration**

Although students could design a menu by hand with paper, technology allows them to be more expressive with their overall presentation. Students can use the Internet and clipart to add precise images that clearly represent their writing. Technology also allows students to link the writing content with digital images to further enhance the overall presentation of this assignment, something that would not be able to be completed with paper and pen writing. Also, students can more effectively collaborate on this project with the ease of the editing features in Microsoft Publisher. I am sure students will be more motivated and excited for this project, thus promoting positive writing attitudes. As the writing standards require, students must remain conscious of referencing the multiple sources they use in such projects.

**Connection to Standards**

Common Core State Standards: Language Arts 6th Grade

* Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
* Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
* Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
* Write routinely over extended time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
* Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

NETS for Students

* Creativity and Innovation: Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.
  + Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes
  + Create original works as a means of personal or group expression
* Communication and Collaboration: Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.
  + Contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems
* Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making: Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.
  + Plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project
* Digital Citizenship: Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior.
  + Advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
  + Exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity
* Technology Operations and Concepts: Students demonstrate a sound understanding of technology concepts, systems, and operations.
  + Understand and use technology systems
  + Select and use applications effectively and productively
  + Transfer current knowledge to learning of new technologies

**Students’ Prior Knowledge**

Students would already have finished their chapters on verbs and modifiers. Although grammar knowledge is helpful, this will be an assessment to evaluate their writing skills, focusing on the trait, word choice. It is challenging for me and the students to break their old habits of using repetitive, vague language. As their teacher I find the need to provide students with alternate ways of thinking and producing strong writing samples. Students have already had some smaller writing projects to further their writing skills in this area, but this will be a much larger and formal writing assessment.

**Content Knowledge**

I personally find the use of effective word choice a powerful way to write, so I am very comfortable showing samples and encouraging students to write in similar ways. Most of my teaching information is gathered from multiple teacher resource books and Internet findings, rather than a textbook. Regardless, I feel I have worked out most of the kinks of a novice teacher and found some solid information for me to be competent and effective in teaching word choice and writing skills to my students.

**Pedagogical Knowledge**

It remains important for me to be consistent in each writing assignment, so I use the 6+1 Traits to introduce, instruct, and evaluate students’ writing skills, and this writing assignment is like many others. Students are often overwhelmed when too many expectations are given for an assignment, so I try to make each assignment focus on a specific trait or writing skill to lessen the burden of writing (as so many of my students often feel!). Allowing non-traditional ways of writing and expressing themselves is an important factor to consider while teaching middle school students. So, too, are their natural inclinations for socialization! Allowing students the opportunity to socialize while learning and collaboration tends to bring out stronger samples of writing.

**Technology Knowledge**

I am comfortable using Microsoft Publisher and Internet resources in my writing lessons, as well as teach my students how to use the technology. I feel confident and capable of troubleshooting and monitoring students’ interactions with such technology, too. I can effectively model safe, legal, and responsible ways to use information and the Internet in hopes of my students doing the same. If the Internet is not working on any given day, I would probably put this project on hold for a day or two until it was up and running again. I have actually planned “Plan B” in advance because too often the Internet does not want to work on my schedule! This does not fluster me, so I feel I can roll with whatever the day brings with unpredictable technology situations.

**TPACK Analysis**

Students are given the opportunity to create an authentic writing sample. They will plan, develop, and present their menu in a start to finish format working together with their partner. Although some formatting and content requirements are prescribed, students have the freedom to express themselves and writing in a variety of ways, rather than conforming to a single right/wrong answer. The use of technology allows them to demonstrate their content knowledge, as well as meet their needs as social beings. In this example, technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge effectively work together.

**Assessment Plan**

I will use the following rubric to assess the students. The rubric categories are based on our school’s use of the 6+1 Writing Traits, and the students are very much accustomed to the format and terms on the rubric. My goal for all students is to be in the 3-4 range on the rubric. As with many of my writing projects, those students who do not meet this goal would be able to make revisions until they are able to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the subject matter.

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| **6th Modifier Menu** | **4: Excelling** | **3: Achieving** | **2: Developing** | **1: Emerging** |
| **Ideas and Content** | 🞄Descriptions are included for:   * Creative title * 2 Appetizers * 2 Soups or Salads * 2 Main Entrees * 2 Desserts * 2 Beverages | | 🞄Minimum description requirements were not met. | |
| **Organization** | 🞄Menu items and images are organized in an easy to follow format. | | 🞄Menu items and images are presented in a confusing or unorganized format. | |
| **Sentences** | 🞄Complete sentences are used. | | 🞄Sentence fragments or run-on sentences are present. | |
| **Word Choice** | 🞄A variety of precise adjectives, adverbs, and verbs are effectively used.  🞄Effective sensory and imagery descriptions are provided. | 🞄Some variety exists in strong modifiers and verbs.  🞄Some effective sensory or imagery descriptions are present. | 🞄Repetitive modifiers and verbs are present.  🞄Attempts sensory or imagery descriptions. | 🞄Vague, boring words are present.  🞄No sensory or imagery descriptions present. |
| **Conventions** | 🞄Few or no errors in grammar or spelling. | 🞄Few minor errors in grammar or spelling. | 🞄Many errors in grammar or spelling. | 🞄Numerous errors in grammar or spelling. |
| **Presentation** | 🞄Font features are personalized  🞄Minimum of 5 images/graphics present  🞄List of Internet resources included in footer | | | |